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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yuma Jury Finds Far West Water & Sewer Guilty on Five Charges

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Oct. 16, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced the guilty verdicts of Far West Water & Sewer in a case resulting from the deaths of two Yuma sewer workers in October 2001. A Yuma County jury found Far West guilty on five of the six charges filed against the company. The jury announced its verdicts on Friday, Oct. 14.

The guilty verdicts included negligent homicide of James Gamble; endangerment of James Gamble; knowing violation of a safety standard causing the death of an employee, James Gamble; aggravated assault of Nathan Garrett; and endangerment of Nathan Garrett.

Far West also faced a manslaughter charge for the death of Gary Lanser, an employee of a Far West contractor, Santec Corporation. The jury acquitted Far West of manslaughter for Lanser's death and was hung on the charge of negligent homicide.

The case follows the company's January 2003 indictments for the deaths of Gamble and Lanser. They died in a sewer tank near Mesa del Sol Golf Course in Yuma on Oct. 24, 2001. Gamble entered the tank to remove a plug blocking sewage while Connie Charles, a Far West Water & Sewer foreperson, turned on a pump running sewage into the tank through another line. Gamble inhaled sewage gas and immediately collapsed into the tank. Nathan Garrett, Lanser and then Charles entered the tank to attempt a rescue. All three were overcome by the sewage gas. Lanser died and Garrett suffered damage to his lungs.

Witnesses for the State testified the air in the sewer tank had not been tested during the day, the workers were not properly trained, safety equipment was not available or used, and required safety and rescue procedures were not followed.

Sentencing in this case is scheduled for Nov. 10, 2005. The company faces potential criminal fines of more than \$7 million for the five felony convictions. Assistant Attorneys General Christina Fitzpatrick and Mark Horlings prosecuted this case.

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